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Havasupai

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"I Too Mad"

Lanoman, the son of Sinyella, was the younger of the reservation's two policemen. According to his father's estimate of his age, he was in his early thirties. Taller than many of the men, and stockily built, his regular features and light complexion gave him a handsome appearance, which somewhat justified his vanity. He had mastered enough English to meet his needs but his courtly manners were his greatest asset. "Lanoman, the gentleman," he was dubbed by a visiting tourist, for all who met him were impressed by his graciousness. [625] 159

No one seemed to know Vesnor's age. Counted in years, it might have been forty or fifty, but the dark wisdom in his gloomy eyes made one feel that he had witnessed savage cruelty and lived with danger until he no longer knew the meaning of fear. He was thin and wiry, his muscles taut springs, his skin dark and wrinkled, but there was a sureness and swiftness about him that inspired confidence. Whenever I was in my office, Vesnor was there, ready to jump astride his pony to bring in a bad Indian at a moment's notice. Occasionally, when not too pressed for time, I laid aside my work and we talked, sometimes quite frankly. Vesnor's questions sprang from whatever thought was uppermost in his mind, and he probed into my personal affairs with native simplicity—as if he were with one of his tribesmen. He wanted the straight truth, even though the Havasupai themselves delighted in making false statements to an inquisitive white person. One afternoon when

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his mind was fumbling for words. "One day Jesus come. Stand by bed. All white. Dress, everything all white. Shine like sun. He say pretty quick get well. He go 'way. I get well quick." 159 154

That was all. Vesnor had no more to tell. Perhaps he saw the astonishment in my face, for his thoughts recoiled and tucked themselves away in a secret place back of his inscrutable eyes. My imagination conjured up the scene: a sick Indian lying on his blanket on the dirt floor of his home, by his side a Shining Presence. Vesnor, an untutored Indian, had experienced the miracle of healing much as John G. Whittier had so beautifully written of it:

> The healing of His seamless dress
> Is by our beds of pain:
> We touch Him in life's throng and press,
> And we are whole again.

This was Vesnor in a new version. His story left me awed and puzzled. Where did he get his concept of Jesus, the Healer? No missionary had ever worked among these people. The school employees held a Sunday service for the children, and the adults had received some instruction in the tenets of the Christian faith. But, it was arresting to learn that Vesnor, his mind ruled by spirits and strange gods and filled with the medicine man's lore, had had that priceless revelation.

The Indians respected and obeyed Vesnor. His background and experience made him a valuable policeman. Lanoman, however, gently sidestepped any errand that might involve ruffled feelings or bring unpleasant repercussions. If word must be sent to the men of the village that we had a load of freight at Hilltop, and would pay cash to the packers who brought it down, Lanoman was the man to send. He could escort tourists or forest rangers to any part of the canyon, and win their hearts while doing it. Everyone liked gentlemanly Lanoman. It was hard to believe that he had no white blood, or had never been taught the white man's social customs. Yet under that suave exterior was a mind steeped in the 159 625

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159 625 traditions and superstitions of his people. He had been healed, dramatically, by the medicine man. Leslie Spier, in his "Havasupai Ethnography," relates the story as told to him by Sinyella, Lanoman's father.

159 755 "Once about 1885, when Lanoman, my oldest son, was about seventeen years old, he was pretty sick." He then explained that he had appealed to a Walapai shaman who decided that the illness was too difficult for him to heal. Sinyella continued:

Then I took him over to Coconino Basin; other Havasupai went there, too. I found many Navaho there; I asked who was a shaman. They said, "One who is here is a good shaman," and they showed him to me. I asked him to cure my boy: "If you cure him, I will give you two dollars," and I gave it to him. He sang for the boy two nights; he had two women with him who also sang. He had four stone arrowpoints, and he stuck one in the ground at the head and one at the foot and one on each side of the boy as he lay there. He stopped after two nights and said that the boy would not get well.

Next, Sinyella appealed to a shaman of his own tribe. His verdict was: "It is pretty hard to cure that sickness." The shaman proved his point by declaring that Sinyella's grandfather, now deceased, who had been a shaman, had sent his spirit to take Lanoman to the spirit world. However, he recommended his younger brother A'mal, also a shaman, for whom Sinyella sent a messenger. Sinyella related what followed:

The night he arrived, he began; he sang all night very loud, and sucked. His spirit brought out all kinds of things, hail (it looked like hail), lightning, clouds, snow, and something relating to a wolf. He brought out all the things that made the boy sick and showed them to us in his hand. . . . *He showed us the hail, but he told us about the lightning,* clouds, snow, and wolves: "I got these, but they cannot be readily seen. My spirit can see them perfectly, however. I will just show you the hail, so you can see it is all right." When he sucked out the wolf, he staggered around and ran out into the darkness. We heard the wolf howl. The hailstone was round and white; it loked like hail. He also sucked out my grandfather's spirit, which he showed us; a little white man, with a head but no limbs. He did this two nights. Then the boy

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buckskin was tied about its neck, which slowly tightened, in drying, until the pony gasped for breath and staggered helplessly; a shove sent the animal crashing over the rim. It bounced from ledge to ledge, then, caught on a projecting point, lay there to decay, far above its intended destination.

In the village, peach trees were cut to free their spirits that they might bear their sweet, luscious fruit in the new home of the beloved wife. The house was burned; the girl's name must never again be spoken.

Indeed no biographies could be more fascinating than those of our two policemen, if the author delved into the forces that made each man what he was: the cloak of courtliness concealing Lano-man, the Indian of primitive culture; Vesnor, the stern, forceful Indian of the warpath, healed by the Christians' Savior. By apportioning duties according to the merits of the man, we had an efficient police force.

When a feud broke out resulting in the destruction of growing corn, I called on Vesnor. It might mean a quarrel that would stir the tribe to the boiling point, or it might be child's play, but I wanted the help of a fearless man.

Late one Saturday afternoon Little Jim entered my office. He wore the Indians' comfortable moccasins, but his hair was cut short, white-man fashion. Faded blue jeans and a torn red shirt clung to his damp body, for the canyon walls still reflected the heat.

"Um-m," he began with embarrassment, "Me got corn. Little grow." He reached his hand down to about twelve inches above the floor to indicate his corn's tallness. "Last night, womans walk on corn. Break down. No good."

I went with him to his corn patch down in the village. It was a small plot, about fifteen feet square. The corn on one corner was broken and trampled into the ground, and everywhere were the imprints of small, bare feet.

"Whose footprints are these?" I asked, for a smart Indian like Little Jim couldn't be fooled on the imprint of a tribesman's foot.

525 177 most, thus accommodating quite a number of players. In this instance, it was the woman and not her husband who arranged the games, owned the cards, and received the profit.

Anyone, male or female, was at liberty to invite players to his home and regularly "operate" card games if he or she could attract interested persons. Apparently, there was little competition for this position. Players seemed to have a tacit agreement to patronize a particular person who made it known that he wished to act as gambling host.

[625] By the summer of 1958, public card games had been abandoned under pressure from the agent and the Indian policeman, but there was a hint that now and then players assembled at some secluded spot or secretly played in a private home. The men, however, openly played their native hidden ball game, and apparently no attempt was made to stop them.

Dancing

[535] [562] Women participate in all dances now performed by the Havasupai. In former times they were excluded only from the masked dance described by Spier (1928, 266-7) and which today is referred to as a rain dance.

Raiding

721 648 [562] Only one instance is reported in which a woman took part in a raiding party. The woman's name in translation was White Hair, and she was the "grandmother" (mother's mother's sister) of Pete Mulgullo, now deceased.

Once when many families were camped near their fields in Cataract Canyon, a party of four or five Havasupai men, including a son of White Hair, went hunting in the vicinity of Topocoba Hilltop. After killing many mountain sheep, they went into a cave to sleep before the long journey home. While they slept, a party of about eight Apaches surprised them, killing all but one of the hunters, a man who outran them among the rocks.

When this man returned to the canyon, he told the people that the hunting party had killed many sheep but he said nothing about the Apache raid. The people waited for the other hunters to return, and after about 10 days, they suspected that Apaches had killed them. (No explanation can be given by present informants regarding this strange silence of the survivor except that "he just didn't want to tell it.")

721 562 One man went in search of the hunters and found them all dead. Alone, he heaped their bodies up and burned them. When he returned to the canyon with his report, White Hair, at that time an old woman, became very angry at the Apaches. Arousing some of the men, she set out as leader of a revenge raiding party to track the killers of her son. Mounted on horses, the